

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Ralph Hall**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Science and Technology**  
**Markup of**  
**H.R. 6063, *The NASA Reauthorization Act of 2008***

June 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for scheduling this morning's markup of H.R. 6063, legislation authorizing NASA for Fiscal Year 2009. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill and I hope other Members here today will consider adding their support as well.

H.R. 6063 is a one year bill that demonstrates Congress' commitment to maintain a strong and vital space program and will serve as a signal to a new Administration that NASA has deep support within Congress. Passage of this bill is important for another reason; I worry that if we allow NASA's authorization to lapse, the next Presidential administration may interpret our failure to act as a sign of weakness for NASA, and that in turn might tempt a new Administration to divert agency resources. I don't think any of us in this room want that to happen.

The bill before us today contains a number of important provisions. It authorizes \$19.2 billion for NASA for FY09, and provides an additional \$1 billion to accelerate development of the new crew vehicle launch system. It emphasizes that NASA should maintain a strong and balanced array of science, aeronautics, and human spaceflight programs. It also directs NASA to fly out its full manifest of Shuttle missions, including those dedicated to flying spare parts to the International Space Station, as well as adding a flight to take the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer to the ISS, as we originally committed to do some years ago. The AMS was stricken from the Shuttle manifest following the *Columbia* tragedy, but I believe given the huge investment in resources, we ought to make good on our original commitment to fly this expensive instrument to the ISS.

H.R. 6063 directs NASA to continue the important task of developing the *Constellation* system, which will provide our country with a modern, more robust, and safer manned spaceflight capability that will enable our astronauts fly out of Low Earth orbit, an ability we haven't had since the retirement of Apollo over 30 years ago.

As most of you are aware, once the Shuttle is retired at the end of this decade, our country will have to buy seats from the Russians – for as long as five years – to assure a U.S. presence on the International Space Station. Our payments for rides on their Soyuz spacecraft have not yet been negotiated, but it will be expensive, and sadly, we'll be making these purchases at a time when NASA will be laying off thousands of engineers and technicians from the Shuttle program. In an effort to minimize our reliance on the Russians, as I mentioned a moment ago, this bill authorizes an additional \$1 billion to speed up development of the new *Constellation* system. This additional investment is more than justified.

This bill also includes a number of provisions to encourage NASA, working with the private sector, to foster development of a domestic commercial cargo launch capability, primarily designed to take supplies to the space station. In addition, H.R. 6063 includes language directing NASA to solicit for commercial crew launch capability.

Turning to other parts of NASA, H.R. 6063 embraces a number of recommendations that were put forward by witnesses from government, industry, and academia who testified in hearings before this Committee, and the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, over the previous 18 months. These are sensible provisions designed to strengthen aeronautics, space science, and Earth science research programs; encourage technology risk reduction policies and activities; foster efficient technology transfer from NASA to other federal agencies and to the private sector; detect and mitigate the threat of Near-Earth Objects; and research and monitor the effects of space weather on satellites. This list is not exhaustive, but I wanted to mention these few examples to emphasize to all Members the breadth of this bill and how it improves upon many of NASA's activities and programs.

Before closing, I want to point out that during development of this bill, the Democratic staff have been very open and forthright, sharing early ideas and drafts of the bill with our Republican staff. It has been a close and productive partnership, and I want to especially recognize and praise the hard work of Dick Obermann.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.